# GROWTH AND EVOLUTION IN THREE PHILADELPHIA ARTIST COLLECTIVES: THE CLAY STUDIO, NEXUS/FOUNDATION FOR TODAY'S ART, VOX POPULI

PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ARTS ADMINISTRATION DREXEL UNIVERSITY

BY

FILIZ S. O'BRIEN, B.F.A., B.A.

* * * * *

DREXEL UNIVERSITY
2012

APPROVED BY

_____

THORA JACOBSON
ADVISOR
GRADUATE PROGRAM IN
ARTS ADMINISTRATION

# ABSTRACT

Three collectives located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania are examined to uncover the critical issues affecting the success and direction of artist collectives. The purpose of this study is to better understand the Artist Cooperative movement as a visual art organizational model and to unveil the key aspects or components that allow the artist cooperative to grow and transform successfully throughout its life cycle. Through investigation of the histories of The Clay Studio, Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art, and Vox Populi, critical issues and trends are discovered contributing to these collectives success, including the necessity of artists as stakeholders, artists involvement in governance, and the availability of long-term affordable physical space.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the many people who supported me through this process:

Amy Adams, Nick Cassway, Jimmy Clark, Suzanne Horvitz, Kathryn Narrow, and Amy Sarner Williams, for sharing their knowledge and personal memories of the collectives examined.

My advisor, Thora Jacobson, for her patience and encouragement throughout.

My friends and family, for the never-ending moral support.

My boyfriend TJ, for the many cups of coffee that were delivered to me over the past year…

TABLE OF CONTENTS

# STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

An Artist Collective or Cooperative is an autonomous visual art organization or association owned jointly and controlled democratically by its members.[1] Through an Artist Collective members can share resources and responsibilities to fulfill their needs and goals, whether those are focused on individual and or collective interests. Ultimately, these collectives serve their members and communities with the potential of continuing on to assist members beyond the entrepreneurial founders. Frequently these collectives grow into very successful and sustaining organizations with expanded missions and deep community ties.

Through this investigation of the history of artist-run organizations and their life cycles, three collectives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania will be examined to find out: *How does an artist run organization, based on collective values and culture, know that it needs to change? And how does it set forth to accomplish those changes while staying true to its mission and core values? How does an artist run organization continue to serve its stakeholders effectively over the course of its existence? What critical issues emerge affecting the success and direction of an artist collective?* The purpose of this study is to better understand the Artist Cooperative movement as a visual art organizational model and to

[1] Georgia Council for the Arts, "GCA White Paper: Artist Cooperatives," http://gca.georgia.gov/00/article/0,2086,148472487_148551957_156928074,00.html.

unveil the key aspects or components that allow the artist cooperative to grow and transform successfully throughout its life cycle.

Examples of Artist Collectives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania who have experienced long-term success and sustainability include Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art, Vox Populi, and the Clay Studio. These artist-run organizations were chosen because of the similar principles and purpose upon which they were founded and the collectives' relative age. Both Nexus (founded 1975) and Vox Populi (founded in 1988) sought to create a collective that would support challenging and experimental work by artists who were underrepresented.[2] [3] The Clay Studio, founded in 1974, shared in the vision of a collective group to support emerging artists in their discipline.[4]

This investigation seeks to identify and analyze the critical points of growth and transformation of three artist run organizations throughout their life cycles to better understand the moments that demanded change and the types of support necessary to allow for long term sustainability and success.

---

[2] NEXUS/Foundation for Today's Art, "About NEXUS," http://www.nexusphiladelphia.org/about.html.
[3] Vox Populi, "About," http://www.voxpopuligallery.org/index.php?about=on&id=1.
[4] The Clay Studio, "History," http://www.theclaystudio.org/about/history.php.

# INTRODUCTION

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The artist collective movement, as a visual art organizational model, is currently difficult to explore because the model of a collective is based on a more informal decision-making process. Author Dan Gunn states, "[Artist Collectives] are the result of a specific cultural, political, and economic climate that informs the present condition of artist-run spaces and determines their lifespan and collective reception."[5]

This study will assist in expanding the knowledge of artist cooperatives as an organizational model by documenting, identifying, and analyzing the lifecycles of Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art, Vox Populi, and the Clay Studio. A main resource for nonprofit organizational lifecycles, the second edition of *Nonprofit Lifecycles: Stage-Based Wisdom for Nonprofit Capacity* by Susan Kenny Stevens, PH.D, which is oriented towards small to midsized nonprofit organizations. It is important to note this publication does not discuss the lifecycle niceties of artist collectives, which suggests an important reason why this study is necessary. Ultimately, this study will assist in understanding the moments of transition in their lifecycle that foster long-term sustainability and success. Upon completion,

---

[5] Dan Gunn, "Artist-Run Spaces: A Brief History Since 1984," Proximity Magazine, http://proximitymagazine.com/2009/07/artist-run-spaces-a-brief-history-since-1984/.

this in-depth study will be available for the artistic community, specifically as a resource for Artist Collective leaders, to assist in making informed decisions on their organization's future success.

Alternative Art Spaces began in the United States as early as post-World War II, but were founded more frequently in the late 1960's into the 1970's. Many of these Alternative Art Spaces have taken the form of Artist Collectives, founded by artists and owned jointly and controlled democratically by its members.[6] Through an Artist Cooperative members can share resources, costs, and responsibilities to fulfill their goals and needs.[7] Ultimately, these cooperatives serve their members and sometimes continue to grow into larger, successful, and sustaining organizations with expanded missions. To begin to understand Artist Cooperatives in Philadelphia, it is necessary to understand the Alternative Art Space movement with included Artist Collectives. Several influential factors came together in the late 1960s that created the true era of Alternative Spaces in the 1970s in the United States including rebellion against mainstream art institutions, a substantial increase of artists in the workforce between 1970 and 1980, and grants from the newly created National Endowment for the Arts, discussed in several articles and sources.

---

[6] Lynne Warren, "Art Centers, Alternative," Encyclopedia of the History of Chicago, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/74.html.
[7] Georgia Council for the Arts, "GCA White Paper: Artist Cooperatives," http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/74.html.

One of the three influential factors to the Alternative Space movement was heavy rebellion against mainstream art institutions, including museums and commercial galleries in the United States.[8] Both the Encyclopedia of Chicago online and *Alternative Art, New York, 1965-1985: A Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective (Cultural Politics)* by Julie Ault discusses this trend. During the late 1960s, Ault writes:

> Relations between changing conceptions and forms of art practice and kinds of places and spaces art circulated in, as well as the desire to battle constructively the frustration and disillusionment engendered by the establishment system for the distribution of art, led to the creation of the alternative sector in the 1970s. Influenced by concerns of accessibility, portability, and low-cost production, alternative strategies for art making, venues and distribution sites forms of art emerged.[9]

The Philadelphia artistic community was sharing in this rebellious feeling of the time.

Through the 1960s and 70s, mainstream art institutions in Philadelphia were unable to recognize the current artistic scene around them. Between 1955 and 1975, the Philadelphia Museum of Art had not hosted a single exhibition featuring local artists and the Institute of Contemporary Art had only just begun its "Made in Philadelphia" series a few years earlier in 1973. Often this was due to very limited acquisition funds within these organizations. Artists felt a desire to take fate into their own hands by establishing new opportunities for themselves

---

[8] Warren.
[9] Julie Ault, ed., "Alternative Art, New York, 1965-1985: A Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective (Cultural Politics)" (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), Google Books edition.

and, as co-founder of Nexus Suzanne Horvitz states, “people in the community recognized that what Nexus wanted to do ‘needed to be done’”, which was to create a place that supports experimental art by emerging artists in Philadelphia.[10]

Nationally, formal art establishments were also out of sync with the social, political, and cultural diversity among artists and the work they produced. For example, *Alternative Art, New York, 1965-1985: A Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective (Cultural Politics)* discusses this topic in-depth exploring several Alternative Art Spaces and Collectives rebelling against art institutions neglecting African-American heritage and culture.

The second and highly important factor to the developing popularity of Alternative Spaces and Artist Cooperatives was the exponential growth of artists in the United States between 1970 and 1980. The growth was discovered in a research study conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts in April of 1983. According to data made available by the Bureau of the Census, the total labor force of artists in the 1980 Census of Population increased from 599,066 people counted in 1970 to 1,085,693 people in 1980. American artists increased by 81% between 1970 and 1980 and all 50 states and the District of Columbia participated in this gain. Among all the regions in the United States, the report emphasizes the largest grown took place in the Mid-Atlantic region, which

[10] Andrew Suggs, ed., *Vox Populi: We’re working on it*, (Philadelphia: Vox Populi, 2010), 95.

includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.[11] This sudden increase in Artists could reasonably explain the need for additional artistic spaces and outlets. Their desire and need led artists to form their own groups and cooperative, ultimately allowing control of their own destinies.

The third factor assisting in the formation of the Alternative Space era was the newly created independent agency of the federal government, the National Endowment of the Arts. Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA is "dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts, both new and established; bringing the arts to all Americans; and providing leadership in arts education." It is also the largest annual national funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases.[12] In the beginning of the alternative art movement, alternative spaces had been forced to survive largely on private funding of various kinds. This changed dramatically in 1972 when the NEA "began supplying substantial support" for local efforts. By 1978, the NEA established a separate granting category for "artists' spaces" as author Brian Wallis discusses in *Alternative Art, New York, 1965-1985: A Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective (Cultural Politics).* Within this new category of the NEA, funds increased further and alternative spaces expanded on a national

[11] National Endowment for the Arts, Research Division. "Artists Increase 81% in the 1970s," http://www.nea.gov/research/Notes/3.pdf.
[12] National Endowment for the Arts, Research Division "About Us," http://www.nea.gov/about/AtAGlance.html.

level.[13] Public funding of this nature for Alternative Spaces and Cooperatives is seen in large cities including New York and Chicago as stated in the *Encyclopedia of Chicago*. Chicago's developing Artist Cooperatives in the 1970s were supported by the newly created and generous grants by the NEA, which assisted in the success of these artistic ventures whom quickly became a vital part of the Chicago art community.[14]

Although it is reasonable to believe these three influential factors may hold true throughout the United States in creating the era of Alternative Spaces in the 1970s, it is important to recognize that there is a gap in literature and resources available discussing both the Alternative Spaces in general and events specifically in Philadelphia. Currently, one of the only known publications documenting and discussing Artist Collectives in Philadelphia is the publication celebrating the 21st anniversary of the Philadelphia Artist Collective Vox Populi called *We're Working On It*. Included in this publication is the first written history of Vox Populi by Amy Adams, the starting point for a history of artist-run spaces in Philadelphia by Richard Torchia, and an essay on Philadelphia's identity as a center of artistic production by Paul Galvez.[15]

---

[13] Brian Wallis, "Public Funding and Alternative Spaces," in *Alternative Art, 1965-1985: A Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective (Cultural Politics)*, ed. Julie Ault (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) Google Books edition.
[14] Warren.
[15] Suggs, 92-97.

In addition to these few published sources documenting the alternative space movement, primary sources are used including interviews with the founding members and current staff to document, analyze and understand how the selected three artist collectives grew from an offspring of the alternative art movement through several decades into generally successful and mature organizations. With this knowledge, this investigation hopes to discover the key aspects or components that allow the artist cooperative to grow and transform, from an artist group into enduring organizations like Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art, Vox Populi, and the Clay Studio to ultimately serve as a model to future organizations.

# CHAPTER ONE: THE CLAY STUDIO

## FORMATION

The Clay Studio, currently a community resource recognized internationally for the creation and education of ceramic arts, began modestly. Founded in 1974, the Studio was formed by Ken Vavrek, a Professor at Moore College of Art & Design**,** and four of his continuing education students: Jill Bonovitz, Janice Merendino, Betty Parisano, and Kathie Regan Dalzell.[16] Ken Vavrek found the Clay Studio's original location on the 100 block of Orianna Street and hoped that it would be a living and working space for him. He saw that there was more space than he needed and realized there was enough working space to accommodate more people. He asked some of his students if they would be interested in starting a shared studio on the lower two floors of this building and the Clay Studio began.[17] It was initially "envisioned as a low cost, collective studio space to serve as a stepping-stone for students fresh out of art school, offering affordable studio space and shared equipment".[18]

Early on, however, the Studio "consciously shifted the mission from an inward focus to an outward educational and community focus. It was the Clay Studio artists' intention to affirm the importance of the ceramic arts alongside other art

---

[16] The Clay Studio, "History of the Clay Studio," Internal document emailed to author, April 27, 2010.
[17] Jimmy Clark. "The Clay Studio," Interview by author, October 29, 2011. Electronic recording. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Author's archive.
[18] The Clay Studio, "History," http://www.theclaystudio.org/about/history.php.

forms, as well as to bring clay as an accessible, tactile medium to a broad range of people."[19] Unlike many collectives beginning in the 1970's and 80's rebelling against the "Art World", the Clay Studio wanted to be accepted in the mainstream art world.[20] In fact, Philadelphia was at the forefront of the movement that wanted art to be described in terms of materials used with advocates like Helen Drutt. Drutt created one of the first galleries in the nation to be committed to crafts. Her gallery and collection intended "to open up the traditional categories of artistic expression, and to welcome "craft", "design", and "jewelry" into the galleries."[21] Like Drutt, the Clay Studio was seeking acceptance as a form of 'Art' not just as a 'craft' and the desire to be peers with other art venues in the city. The five founders quickly grew to twelve to sixteen people and the group decided they needed a larger space to work. Somewhere between 1978 and 1979, the Clay Studio moved a short distance to Arch Street.[22] Around the same time, Vavrek departed from the collective.

During this time, funding for the Clay Studio came solely in the form of membership dues. With hopes of receiving supplemental funding from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the Clay Studio decided to apply for non-profit

---

[19] The Clay Studio, "History," http://www.theclaystudio.org/about/history.php.
[20] Ault.
[21] Damian Skinner, "Ornament as Art: Avant-Grade Jewelry from the Helen Williams Drutt Collection," The Journal of Modern Craft, v.3, n.2 (July 2010), http://www.artjewelryforum.org/book-reviews/ornament-art-avant-garde-jewelry-helen-williams-drutt-collection.
[22] Clark.

status and officially became a 501( c )(3) in 1979.[23] However, the Studio had decided to become a nonprofit solely to apply for state grants and had no intentions to otherwise resemble a nonprofit. The members were adamant about retaining their control over the collective in order to continue to make and exhibit work that helped propel the acceptance of ceramics in the art world. In order to fulfill the non-profit requirements they made themselves, the artists, the Board of Directors so they could maintain control of the Clay Studio's artistic product, process, decision-making, and governance.[24] There were no 'outsiders' on the board and the artists intended to keep it this way to avoid deviating from their mission. Within the Clay Studio's first six years, they had already made headway on its goals. The artist-collective gained the interest of additional ceramic artists in Philadelphia, moved to a larger location to accommodate them, and continued making artwork. The group also applied and received their nonprofit status and organized a Board of Directors from among their member artists.

TRANSITION

During the early years of any artist collective, there are many hurdles and obstacles to overcome as they define themselves. Establishing a mission, vision, and goals for the group is vital along with creating momentum among participants. In addition, the management of operations and financial obligations alone can become overwhelming obstacles for any newly created collective.

---

[23] The Clay Studio, "History," http://www.theclaystudio.org/about/history.php.
[24] Clark.

The Clay Studio has encountered and conquered its fair share of challenges and many individuals played roles in this transitional time for the Clay Studio. Participation of individuals like Bert Horowitz, Effie Paul, Jimmy Clark, and Kathryn Narrow made positive and lasting impressions on the Clay Studio.

Being an artist-run group, each individual person's actions and perspective impact the collective, making it unique in its own right. However, one key participant in the Clay Studio's history came from a non-arts background and his involvement began by chance. In 1980, shortly after the Clay Studio moved to a larger space on Arch Street, a major electrical fire destroyed the building. "Undaunted, tenacious and with a smaller and more dedicated group, the Clay Studio reopened six months later in modest quarters at 49 North 2nd Street", its third location.[25] Through this event Bert Horowitz, the insurance adjuster who attended to the fire claim meeting, was introduced to the group and was very intrigued by them. He also realized that they needed help.[26] Horowitz saw the studio's need to raise funds beyond the resident artists' dues and modest Pennsylvania Council grants to keep the Studio going. Horowitz became involved with the group and helped the studio create its first community-based board, on which he served.

Following a fire that destroyed the Arch Street Building, founder Ken Vavrek departed, and a third move under their belts, the humbled collective decided to hire their first executive director for the Clay Studio. The first attempt at a

[25] The Clay Studio, "History," http://www.theclaystudio.org/about/history.php.
[26] Clark.

Director was Miriam Pritchard who was a member artist at the studio. This attempt was unsuccessful but was followed by three additional directors from outside the Clay Studio, all who were practitioners in art with little or no training in the way of business management. The first was Wendy Worthington and the second was Effie Paul.[27] The third was Jimmy Clark, a ceramic artist, who began his directorship in 1986 and continued through 2001. When Clark took the position it was only part time. Upon his arrival to the studio, a strategic plan was in place, which he followed through on while he was Executive Director. The strategic plan included a change of resident artists' term limits to five years in order to expose more incoming artists. Under Clark's leadership, the studio set additional strategic plans over the years and achieved many more goals during his tenure. Throughout the process of finding an Executive Director for the Clay Studio in the early 1980's, member artists continued to play a role in retaining their core mission, vision and values with each Director who joined.

During times of growth and transition of leadership, from founding members to hired professionals, longtime member artists continued to play a crucial role in the collective. The artists held on to the collective's institutional legacy by maintaining the core mission, vision and values. A pivotal person especially during these transformative years in the early 1980's was artist Kathryn Narrow. Narrow joined the Studio within the second or third wave of artists to join the

[27] Kathryn Narrow, e-mail message to author, February 7, 2012.

collective, around 1978.[28] Early on, her peers elected Narrow 'President of the Resident Artists', a position in which she represented the resident artists on the Board of Directors. She also served as interim Executive Director twice between the service of Wendy Worthington and Effie Paul and then between Effie Paul and Jimmy Clark. She left in 1987 for a short period and then returned to become the first Gallery/School Manager in 1989.[29] Her participation in various capacities, and over many years, was instrumental in stewarding the collective force. In 1994 Narrow founded the Claymobile. She retired from her staff role in 2008 and remains an Associate Member Artist.[30]

Another pivotal event in the early establishment of the Clay Studio's financial stability and ambitions were attributed to Jimmy Clark's efforts to build relationships with institutional funders. Director Effie Paul had a connection to Ella King Torrey, Program Officer in Culture at The Pew Charitable Trusts, which, at the time, was one of the country's largest foundations, and re-organizing to establish as a thought leader in each of its program areas, including culture. Pew Charitable Trusts had increased their cultural support during the late 1970's and 80's and Ella King Torrey, who was always known as an accessible and supportive program officer, advised Paul on how to make the best case for support when applying on behalf of the Clay Studio. Effie Paul departed around 1985 and Jimmy Clark, as the new Director, was charged with forging effective

---

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] The Clay Studio, "Education," http://www.theclaystudio.org/education/mission.php.

relationships with funders – especially Pew.[31] With Pew's assistance, the Clay Studio went on to increase programming and enhance its facilities significantly. Building relationships with Pew Charitable Trusts and later with The William Penn Foundation enabled the studio to steadily increase the quality and quantity of exhibition and educational opportunities for the artists and the community.

The Clay Studio's relationship with the Pew Charitable Trusts and other foundations evolved to become very productive for both the Studio and the community it served. Similar to the mentorship of Ella King Torrey, Clark developed deep relationships with other funding professionals in Philadelphia, including David Stephens from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. "David Stephens came for a visit and recommended that we show our budget as high as possible because grants are based on a percentage of an organization's budget" recalls Clark. At the time, the Pennsylvania Council could not provide a grant for more than ten percent of a grantee's total budget. At the time, the Clay Studio was reporting its finances inaccurately according to the standard practice, and they presented their projected budgets conservatively, in the event that they couldn't make reach their goals. Clark recalls making mistakes like recording the revenue from sale of artwork incorrectly – recording only net revenue, not gross.[32] Clark, like many of his predecessors and colleagues in the community based art world, came from an art making background, not one of business or financial

[31] Clark.
[32] Ibid.

management. With little background in financial management, Clark decided to take the advice of Stephens and others alike.

In 1988, 49 North 2nd Street was sold to real estate investors looking to "flip" the building. However, the financial climate at the time prevented the owners from reselling it as quickly as they had expected. The investors agreed to extend the Clay Studio's lease for two more years, but they increased the rent and re-wrote the lease to include a termination clause that would provide the Clay Studio with only three to six months notice. At the mercy of the building owners looking to make a profit, the Clay Studio knew they needed to begin the search for a new home – preferably one over which they had more control.

Through the Old City Arts Association, a group that included commercial galleries along with non-profit spaces and that started the monthly First Friday's, Clark met a tenant of Harry Kaplan. Kaplan was an Old City real estate investor known for long-term leases at very low rates. He owned many under-developed buildings purchased when Old City itself was largely under-developed. Kaplan was almost an "absentee" landlord and very uninvolved; the tenant was responsible for everything—including build-out (electric, plumbing, and interior renovations) as well as property taxes. Clark, looking for a large space in Old City, contacted Kaplan and visited 139 North 2nd Street. Clark felt that this location was a perfect fit for the Studio and began searching for means to make it possible. The Painted Bride Art Center, a long-time presence on South Street, had

recently moved to a new location at 2nd and Vine Streets. Clark contacted Gerry Givnish, The Bride's Director and long time friend, and asked, "How did you do it?" Givnish explained that Pew and William Penn had funded the move and the fit out of the building.[33]

Clark, determined to get into this new space, used his new and productive relationships with the William Penn Foundation and approached Ella King Torrey at Pew for her guidance and support. William Penn responded first with a $100,000 capital grant contingent on Clark's ability to negotiate a long-term lease and Pew's support to subsidize rent for a period of time.[34] With both Pew Charitable Trusts and The William Penn Foundation on board, Clark negotiated a thirty-year lease for 139 North 2nd Street. The Clay Studio moved into the building in 1990 creating their home and providing them an opportunity to greatly increase their organizational capacity. Ultimately, this move gave them significant street presence, retail space at street level, and expanded their gallery and studio space. Additionally, the move allowed the Clay Studio to bring art collectives and galleries together including Nexus (primary partner), Vox Populi, Highwire, and Zone One to build a network of artistic activity; establishing itself a creative hub and a major factor in Old City's evolution as a cultural district in Philadelphia.

---

[33] Ibid.

[34] Thirty years was the magic number as any rental thirty years or longer the tenant would be responsible for the Philadelphia Real Estate Transfer Tax. Funders wanted the lease to be for as long as possible so it was favorable the lease is looked at in amazement to this day says Clark.

MISSION

Since their founding in 1974, the Clay Studio has retained their core mission of providing a shared studio space and equipment. However, over the years, this mission has intentionally expanded outward. Early on, even before the studio became a non-profit, the artists deliberately adjusted the Studio's mission to become more focused on education and community involvement. Their intention was to affirm the importance of the ceramic arts alongside other art forms, as well as to bring clay as an accessible, tactile medium to a broad range of people.[35] They realized early on that there were no other facilities that did what they did with clay and that there was a need and demand from artists and art lovers of Philadelphia to have a place to learn and work in ceramics. While the Studio gained increased support early on from their community-based Board of Directors and foundation funding increased steadily as time progressed, the Studio was able to expand its vision and values to include a plethora of new exhibition and educational opportunities, as well as community connections. The artist-run studio evolved its vision and values expanded drastically in three specific areas including facilities, exhibition, and education.

Not only did the presence of the studio in the community grow, so did the facilities they had to work with. Originally, Clay Studio was envisioned as a place for artists to go to share studio space and equipment. Facilities were simple

[35] The Clay Studio, "History," http://www.theclaystudio.org/about/history.php.

and could accommodate just a small group of artists. With each move the space and facilities improved, adding capacity to accommodate more working artists and exhibition space to show finished work. Their first space had very basic equipment. Moving to their second location, they added Raku to their firing methods.[36] In 1990 the Clay Studio moved into its fourth location, making a more permanent home at 139 North 2nd Street with multiple floors for studio and ground level exhibition space. With the development of the Clay Studios current location, not only did they create a home for themselves, they created a small community known as the Second Street Art Building.

Early on in the negotiations of the 139 North 2nd Street building for the Clay Studio, funders told Clark that he would have to assemble co-tenants whose purpose and audiences would complement those of the Clay Studio. They felt it was critical to the sustainability of both the Clay Studio and other organizations that were experiencing rent increases and evictions. Clark, seeing the expanse of space within the new facilities, reached out to Suzanne Horvitz at Nexus to see if her group were interested in becoming a co-tenant. With the help of Pew Charitable Trusts and the William Penn Foundation, the Clay Studio under the direction of Clark invited three artist collectives and galleries to join the building creating the Second Street Art Building. It became a network of artistic activity housing four different artist-run galleries including the Clay Studio, Nexus, Highwire and Zone One. They held common openings and held similar hours so

[36] Clark.

visitors from the community could enjoy more with each visit. On the Second Street Art Building's Grand Opening, more than 1,000 people attended. The Clay Studio's vision to identify itself on a par with other art forms in the art world, not simply as a craft, was realized with the connections they made within the Second Street Art Building.[37]

As the Clay Studio matured, so did its exhibition programming. They made great strides and dramatically expanded their vision, curating and hosting ground-breaking and comprehensive ceramics exhibitions. Through exhibition programming, the Clay Studio built a reputation for diversity and international reach to execute memorable exhibitions. One of their major early milestones in exhibitions was their second major show after the creation of the Board of Directors. It was hosted at the Port of History Museum (now The Independence Seaport Museum) in 1987-88. It was a three-part exhibition including a National Invitational, Local Juried, and Resident Artist Showcase. This exhibition was a turning point for the Studio not only because it was widely recognized within the community, but it also signified change in the studio's dynamic. Clark remembers this show "represented more of what the Board hoped to accomplish, a higher profile with nationally recognized artists." Though the artists just wanted to make and show work and live as artists, it was at this point everyone involved realized it was no longer an artist- run organization; it was a community, board-driven organization.

---

[37] Ibid.

Another important milestone in the Clay Studio's ever expanding exhibition programming was in 1992 when the Clay Studio hosted a major international exhibition *Contemporary East European Ceramics* as the centerpiece of the National Council on the Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) national annual conference.[38] [39] The show was presented at the Second Street Art Building, home of the Clay Studio, Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art, High Wire Gallery, and Zone One in Philadelphia.[40] This exhibition was a museum scale show that occupied all four floors of the building. As the "first comprehensive exhibition in the Western Hemisphere of the ceramic arts from that section of the world", it propelled the Clay Studio's reputation both nationally and internationally as a leader in the Ceramics Arts—and Philadelphia as a center for work in clay.[41] The Studio's newly found national profile also resulted in heightened funder interest in the Studio and spurred the interest of international artists in the program, expanding the reach of the Studio's resident artist program.

Simultaneous with expanding exhibition programming, educational opportunities at the Studio were flourishing at an equal pace. Early on in the Clay Studio's history, ceramic education was incorporated. Resident artists would teach classes offered to the Philadelphia community. Until the mid 1980's, ceramic courses

---

[38] The Clay Studio, "History," http://www.theclaystudio.org/about/history.php.
[39] National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, "Past Conferences," http://nceca.net/static/conference_pastconferences.php.
[40] Jimmy Clark, ed., *Contemporary East European Ceramics,* (Philadelphia: The Clay Studio and The Philadelphia Ceramic Consortium, 1991), 1.
[41] Ibid

were the main educational component aside from exhibitions. As the Clay Studio began to build their relationships with additional foundations in Philadelphia, specifically the Pew Charitable Trusts, educational programs were expanded. Aside from ceramic courses, additional educational opportunities were offered in the form of lectures. In 1989, Clay Studio offered its first lecture series themed "West Coast", which focused on artists out of the San Francisco Bay area including artists Ron Nagel and Adrienne Sachs. An exhibition was presented featuring lecturing artists called "American Clay Artists".[42] The lecture series was quickly adopted as a regular program at the Clay Studio with artist workshops offered afterward.

The Clay Studio's arguably most successful educational program to date emerged in 1994, founded by resident artist Kathryn Narrow. Narrow, a former instructor in The University of the Arts' Saturday program for children, recognized there was an educational opportunity for reaching out to children that the studio had not yet considered. The studio attempted to reach younger audiences, as they had for adults, by offering classes for children at the Clay Studio. Unfortunately, the Studio quickly found that due to the lack of families with children in Old City attendance to the classes was very limited. They found that interest from parents existed but from those in other neighborhoods and/or with various other factors that prevented them from bringing their children to the classes. Narrow thought, "since children couldn't come to us, 'we should go to them', and she conceived

[42] Ron Nagle, "Ron Nagle," Rena Bransten Gallery, http://www.renabranstengallery.com/Bio_Nagle.html.

the idea for a traveling educational arts program."[43] Designed as an outreach educational program:

> "The Claymobile is dedicated to bringing clay art education to diverse populations in the Philadelphia region. The Claymobile partners with schools and community based organizations, integrating arts into their curriculum and programs. It enriches the lives of its participants through exposure to the arts, while also encouraging organizations and schools to develop and expand their arts programs."[44]

The Claymobile, Clay Studio's most sustained and successful community based arts education program, was launched with the help of start up funding from the William Penn Foundation and the Knight Foundation.

STAKEHOLDERS

The essence of an artist collective comes in the form of self-organization and democratic governance by its members; the members hold the power to steer the group into the future. Some argue this key quality can be the defining factor whether or not a group is an artist collective or an organization. At the Clay Studio, the group began as an artist collective. The first group of artists came to the studio with their own interest of being involved. Following the first group of artists, member artists (now called Resident Artists) were selected and admitted when another member departed, making a spot available. Artists applied and were juried in by the current resident artists. Early on, the member artists were responsible for paying dues, which were then used sustain the Clay Studios

---

[43] The Clay Studio, "Education," http://www.theclaystudio.org/education/mission.php.
[44] Ibid.

financial obligations, as well as teach classes and assist with other administrative duties.

This style of peer selection continued throughout the first twenty-nine years of the Clay Studio. Even as the Studio created a Board of Directors and brought on Executive leadership, the selection of incoming member artists was never transferred beyond the resident artists. Director Jimmy Clark would at times assist artists in application preparation, but would never participate in selection or even make suggestions regarding the jurying process. As Clark recalls "I felt that peer selection was working so why fix it. I did not want responsibility in that decision since the artists had to live and work with each other in such close proximity. I did not want to be responsible if it did not work out."[45]

Under the direction of Amy Sarner Williams, Clark's successor as Executive Director, Jeff Guido was hired as the Clay Studio's Artistic Director in 2003.[46] With intentions to give the Resident Artists program a more professional quality, Gudio changed how the incoming Resident Artists were selected. Rather than having all the artists selected through peer review, Guido shifted the percentage: fifty percent of new artists would be chosen through peer review by current Resident Artists, the Artistic Director would select twenty-five percent each year,

[45] Clark.
[46] National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, "Jeff Guido," http://nceca.net/static/about_board_guido.php.

and an external guest juror would decide on the last twenty-five percent. The selection process was no longer autonomous.[47]

With this change, Jeff Guido sought to encourage professional development for the Clay Studio and the artists. His goal was to make the selection process "'not so internal' but also wanted the process to be unbiased," says Williams. Guido felt that this system was more professional overall.[48] Although this method of resident artist selection veers away from the origins of the artist collective, it allowed for more diversity among artists and presumably it has established a competitive environment around the quality of the artwork produced. Currently the Resident Artist program provides twelve juried artists, including a fellowship recipient, cost-efficient studio space, supplies and equipment, as well as exhibition and teaching opportunities.[49]

Over the history of the Resident Artists program, there have been changes in the constituency of the program participants. Over time, and particularly after the 1992 *Contemporary East European Ceramics* exhibition, the artists have been more diverse. The Visiting and Member Artist programs have attracted more than 230 artists from thirty-five countries to date.[50] The program is considered by

---

[47] Amy Sarner Williams. "The Clay Studio." Interview by author, November 16, 2011. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Author's archive.
[48] Ibid.
[49] The Clay Studio, "Artists," http://www.theclaystudio.org/artist/.
[50] The Clay Studio, "A Comprehensive Four-Year Plan to Guide the Clay Studio's Continued Success and Relevance: June 2009-June 2013," Internal document emailed to author, April 27, 2010.

many to be one of the two ceramic artist residencies in the United States.[51] Departing president Amy Sarner Williams notes that over time, resident artists have become "more 'emerging artists', less 'fresh out of art school'".[52] This change can be attributed to the heightened reputation of the Clay Studio and its programs internationally, along with the fact that ceramic residencies are still few and far between especially in the United States.

Separate from the Resident Artist program, a new group emerged within the Clay Studio called the Associates, ironically very much like the founding members in terms of their goals. The communal nature of the program is most similar to the Clay Studio's origins, accommodating artists at many levels of accomplishment, style, experience, and commitment. The Associate program is supported in part by forty individuals on a non-juried basis.[53] Unlike the Studio's origin, Clay Studio staff adds incoming members from a waiting list, based on space availability within the program. Current Associates do not have input in artist selection, which interrupts the artistic 'thread' that peer review could create. The program was started in response to the demand from students for studio time beyond the offered classes.[54] The Associates program makes low cost studio space available for individuals within the community. However, because of the Clay Studio's

---

[51] The Clay Studio, "History of the Clay Studio," Internal document emailed to author, April 27, 2010.
[52] Williams.
[53] The Clay Studio, "Associates Program," http://www.theclaystudio.org/artist/associate.php.
[54] Williams.

branding efforts and professional demeanor it was necessary to define their relationship more precisely with the Clay Studio. Since the Associates do not participate in the resident artists' application process, they cannot represent themselves as the Clay Studio. Therefore, they have created their own brand to represent their group: "Handmade in Philadelphia" a group which the Clay Studio embraces programmatically if not promotionally.[55]

FUTURE

Looking back at the accomplishments of the Clay Studio, one ponders what the future holds for the now mature and ambitious organization. As departing President Amy Sarner William discusses the Clay Studio and other arts organizations, she mentions that there will always be struggles in a few areas including fundraising, the handmade, and collectors. Williams believes the biggest struggle for the future is finding support to endure especially when there is so much competition. Williams also notes it is especially difficult in a recession like the one the United States and Philadelphia are currently experiencing; "during these times the external needs are greater, the human need for jobs, food, welfare… the so-called ninety-nine percent. It is hard to compete with that."[56] The Clay Studio finds that the increased human need during economically challenging times impacts the ease of fundraising for the Clay Studio and many other nonprofit organizations.

[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.

Additional struggles that the Clay Studio is faced with particularly affecting those creating visual art is "how to keep the handmade important in the twenty-first century?" Williams ponders this in a current fast-paced and mass-produced world; concerns over the importance of handmade objects in society arise. The public is so used to mass-produced design, some of which is of good quality, so why should they pay so much more for something handmade? Williams seeks to give the public "the experience of using handmade pottery. Living with art. Having art be a part of your every day life. Enhancing the dining experience. Enhancing the sharing of food with others".[57]

Lastly, a common struggle in the art world and experienced by the Studio is "how to get collectors to invest in the work of emerging artists?" Williams is challenged by this issue frequently because of her efforts to promote the work made in the resident artists program. Williams notes that collectors, concerned with the works ability to hold value, feel they are taking a risk when buying work by less established artists so getting collectors to invest has become a constant struggle for most Presidents, Directors, or Gallery Owners.[58] Additionally, ceramic art is still regarded as "craft" by some, so discrimination still exists among collectors as well.

With Williams' struggles in mind, the Clay Studio prepares to embark on an exciting but unknown future. As of December 9, 2011, Amy Sarner Williams

[57] Amy Sarner Williams. E-mail message to author, February 13, 2012.
[58] Williams.

retired as the President of the Clay Studio after being involved as an artists for nineteen years, followed by seventeen years on staff, ten years of which she served as its CEO.[59] Chris Taylor has accepted the demanding post as President, opening a new chapter of the Clay Studio. The main challenge that Taylor will confront is that the Clay Studio is in the last ten years of its thirty-year lease with the late Harry Kaplan, who left the building to his daughter. After confirming that the owner of the property has no philanthropic interest, the Clay Studio must look at all available options. With Taylor in his new role, the Studio will begin a strategic planning process that will guide the future direction of the organization. "This is an exciting time for the Studio but there is no definitive answer. There are no options off the table and we may be looking at many alternatives in space," says Williams.[60]

With so many impending decisions, William implied the Clay Studio could become a very different organization. "We are working with the Nonprofit Finance Fund to look at all options," says Williams. "Also we are going to have to decide which aspects are the most important and will we have to split them up?" For the Clay Studio, this could mean a variety of options including having multiple locations for various portions of the organization. For example, the Studio could possibly keep the Clay Studio shop, which sells artist work, in Old City where foot traffic from pedestrians is vital. It could then move the physical Studio space for classes and resident artists on the fringe of center city

[59] Amy Sarner Williams. E-mail message to author, February 13, 2012.
[60] Williams.

Philadelphia where more space is available at a lower cost. Other options of course include staying in their current facility and adjusting to the new lease terms, or moving the Clay Studio as a whole to a new location. Within the upcoming strategic planning, the Clay Studio will also revisit its mission, vision and values to evaluate what aspects of their current operations are most meaningful to the organization.

# CHAPTER TWO: NEXUS/FOUNDATION FOR TODAY'S ART

## FORMATION

Established in 1975, Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art was founded by Suzanne Horvitz, Vivian Goldstein, and Sandra Lerner, artist/educators, who sought to create an exhibition space for challenging, innovative and compelling exhibitions that stimulated creative thought and dialog among the public.[61] At the time Nexus was conceived, non-commercial galleries were rare and exhibition venues for experimental artwork were hard to come by in Philadelphia.[62] "In those days, there weren't many places for people who were doing work that was not commercially viable to show" says Horvitz. Working in studios at Ninth and Bainbridge streets, Horvitz, Goldstein, and Lerner were creating work that did not fit into the current gallery scene and saw first-hand the need for a new type of exhibition space.[63] Horvitz said that people in the community recognized that what Nexus wanted to do 'needed to be done'. The urgency was twofold: artists needed means to come together and a place to exhibit experimental work not being presented elsewhere.[64]

Feeling the urgency for an exhibition space for alternative art, co-founder Suzanne Horvitz recalls other influences in the founding of Nexus:

---

[61] Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art, "About Nexus," http://nexusphiladelphia.org/about.html.
[62] Suggs, 98.
[63] Robin Rice, "The Success of Nexus," CityPaper.net, June 5–12, 1997, http://archives.citypaper.net/articles/060597/article070.shtml.
[64] Suggs, 95.

> "At the time I was completing my doctorate at Columbia University, working with Justin Shore who was adamant that 'art should not be for sale, it is an experience'. Also my best friend Dotty Attie had founded and run AIR Gallery in New York City, so I was following her experiences get AIR up and running. I was also sharing a studio building at that time with Vivian Goldstein and Sandra Lerner in South Philly. A combination of these things came together and one day over lunch myself, Vivian, and Sandra talked and decided to start Nexus."[65]

What Horvitz was noticing was the cooperative movement and action going on in New York and she realized that Philadelphia could benefit from a similar approach.

Following the initial decision to create an artists-run gallery, Horvitz, Goldstein, and Lerner had to decide exactly what Nexus was going to be. At first, the three founders considered an all women's gallery but quickly decided against that idea when they thought about the possibility of excluding fifty percent of all artists. This began the planning phase, which ultimately took about a year of research in both New York and Philadelphia.[66]

While considering who was going to be involved, the founders began to seek advice from many professionals within the Philadelphia arts community. They began speaking with their peers at University of the Arts and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts to gauge their interest. They also reached out to a variety of professors and university gallery curators at the art schools in

---

[65] Suzanne Horvitz, "Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art." Interview by author, November 12, 2011. Electronic recording. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Author's archive.
[66] Rice.

Philadelphia. Many people gave the three women generous advice, some of which included the late Marian Locks (of Locks Gallery), Janet Kardon (then gallery director of the Philadelphia College of Art and later director of the Institute for Contemporary Art [ICA]), and Diane Vanderlip (Moore College of Art). The founders also spoke with the late Anne d'Harnoncourt (then Curator of Contemporary Art, later the Director and CEO of the Philadelphia Museum of Art) about Nexus. Anne d'Harnoncourt responded positively to this new type of organization and offered her staff to the founder's disposal because she felt it filled a void that existed in Philadelphia. "Anne really took us under her wing" says Horvitz. The museum staff later assisted Nexus in writing their first press release.[67] Ultimately the founders gained the support and advice of the community at large.

During this time the founders also considered different structures for the artist collective, specifically deciding between a Nonprofit Corporation and a Nonprofit Trust under the guidance of tax lawyer Selwyn Horvitz, then married to Suzanne Horvitz. After considering both options, the founders decided on becoming a charitable trust called the Foundation for Today's Art, which supports the Nexus Gallery.[68] The founders became the trustees for the organization. Once the legal governing instrument was agreed upon, the founders began considering who was going to be involved and where it would take place.

---

[67] Ibid.
[68] Nexus Archives, "June 16, 1976," http://nexusphiladelphia.org/archives/?p=773#more-773.

With the communities support behind the artist collective, the founders created a panel of jurors with representation from many of Philadelphia's major art schools and museums comprised of Janet Kardon, David Katzive, Jimmy Lueders, Elizabeth Osborne, David Pease, and Dianne Vanderlip.[69] Following the selection of the jurors, an official call for entries for Nexus' first group of member artists was publicized. Nexus sought artists creating non-commercial artwork who were four to five years out of school to ensure they were no longer under the influence of their professors. The jurors selected sixteen members to begin Philadelphia's first artist-run gallery.[70]

While the panel was seeking members, the founders of Nexus were still seeking an exhibition space. Nexus made the decision early on to be in Center City, so it could be in close proximity to the commercial galleries. Without yet securing a space, they were able to obtain their first grant for $2,000 to assist with lighting.[71] Later, they found a space at 2017 Chancellor Street, right off Rittenhouse Square. The owner Stanley A. Solo of Solo Reality liked their gallery idea and wanted to help. He agreed to fund the renovation of the location to meet their needs and liking, if they would sign a five-year lease. Ultimately, Nexus ended up with 2,500 square feet of warehouse and townhouse space that was adaptable to

[69] Ibid.
[70] Rice.
[71] Horvitz.

changing exhibits of diverse work. Additionally they had an exterior courtyard and basement areas for showing work.[72]

TRANSITION

In a broader perspective, Nexus' most transitional moments have happened throughout the life of the artist-run gallery. In the beginning, it was the transformation of the founders from artists into art administrators. Quickly, Nexus became Horvitz, Goldstein, and Lerner's main focus and the three founders shared the responsibilities of management evenly. Upon graduation from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Lerner was awarded a grant to go to New Mexico for her artwork and left Horvitz and Goldstein in charge.[73] Remaining as a Trustee, Lerner returned from New Mexico and reunited with Nexus but was less involved. Eventually, Goldstein had reduced her involvement significantly as well and encouraged Suzanne Horvitz to become the Executive Director, while all three founders would remain as Trustees until 1998 when Nexus changed from a Nonprofit Trust to a Nonprofit Corporation.

The early years were challenging for Nexus. Most of them were spent organizing exhibitions and learning how to manage the day-to-day of an artist collective gallery. Since they had established their non-profit status during their founding, Nexus began applying for grants right away, receiving support as early as

---

[72] Nexus Archives, "June 16, 1976," http://nexusphiladelphia.org/archives/?p=773#more-773.
[73] Fenix Gallery, "About the Artist," http://fenixgallery.com/artist_bio.php?ID=30.

December 21, 1976 for their group show: *Signatures.*[74] Horvitz and her co-founders found themselves utilizing the Free Library of Philadelphia a great deal, specifically their Foundation Center. They became very dedicated to learning about grants, as they had no prior experience with this subject. Similarly to Clark at the Clay Studio, the founders had no background in management, leadership, or administration. Everything was learned from scratch through practice. Horvitz remembers they "were no threat to anyone because [they] had very little entrepreneurial skills so people were willing to help, which was invaluable". Although the founders had to learn how to write grants, they had the drive and motivation to learn. Horvitz recalls Vivian Goldstein reading *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, which, more in tune with their artistic sensibilities, gave them inspiration to achieve their goals.[75]

The experience of getting Nexus started taught the founders that the professional staffs at foundations, state council, and corporations were there to help, if they asked the right questions. Nexus began to develop relationships with some of those professionals and when they were awarded a small grant, the founders would follow up by asking: *How can we improve our application? What qualities do you look for in applications? Can we see examples?* "Over time, we really learned to ask questions like: *What are your priorities? How have they changed*?" said Horvitz. She also learned to communicate more effectively by becoming more specific in her writing, for example using terminology such as site-specific

[74] Nexus Archives, "1976," http://nexusphiladelphia.org/archives/?cat=7.
[75] Horvitz.

sculpture, environmental sculpture, or site sculpture instead of merely the word sculpture.

Although Nexus encountered many challenges learning to manage an artist-run gallery, it was highly beneficial that all the founding members remained as trustees throughout the early years. Having the founders involved throughout afforded continuity of the mission, vision, and values of the group without deviation. Their involvement was essential in establishing stability and momentum within the group. They allowed Nexus to avoid facing the challenges of leadership transition early on like so many other artists run groups, but the founders could not lead forever.

Coinciding with Nexus' twenty-first birthday, the founders of Nexus decided to step down from their roles. Goldstein, Lerner (founders and trustees) and Horvitz (founder, trustee, and Executive Director) decided to resign in order to pursue individual endeavors. In the summer of 1997, Nexus began the transition from Nonprofit Trust to Nonprofit Corporation with Horvitz overseeing the transition. As a Nonprofit Corporation, they re-wrote bylaws and a created a new governing Board of Directors. This new governing body consisted of independent curator Marsha Moss and Mary Kilroy, then director of Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority's percent for art program, and four artists: Brooke Moyer (the president of the members), Claire Owen, Steven Tucker and Dina Wind.[76] Without the help

[76] Rice.

of a succession or strategic plan the transition was very dramatic and affected Nexus indefinitely. With the three founders departed, much of the institutional legacy was thought to have gone with them.[77]

Following Horvitz's departure, Nexus Gallery Director Anne Raman acted as interim Director. Since Raman worked closely under Horvitz, she was aligned with Nexus' mission and direction, which some describe as an outgrowth of Horvitz's personality as an artist. Unfortunately, when Raman left Nexus around 1998, the organization became in further disarray. Shortly after Anne Raman left the organization, Joan Wetmore was hired as director of Nexus and remained only until 2000.

The following five years (between 2000 and 2005), Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art experiences many traumatic changes. Michael Lane, an uninformed individual from outside the organization, was hired as the Director in 2000. Also around this time the lease at 137 N 2nd Street, as part of the Second Street Art Building, was up for renewal. As artist Nick Cassway recalls, "our lease agreement was quite favorable to us and locked us into a twenty-five year agreement with renewals happening every five years. At the end of our twentieth year the Clay Studio wanted to renegotiate our lease of which we declined."

---

[77] Nick Cassway, "Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art." Interview by author, January 12, 2012. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Author's archive.

After a of series legal actions, the Clay Studio was able to force Nexus out.[78] This event was very devastating to Nexus for many reasons. They lost site control, which they had come to believe was secure for the length of their lease. They also were devastated financially because their rent was still based on rates from the early 1990's when the agreement was created. Without secure and affordable space, Nexus was forced to relocate with short notice. They landed in the Crane Building in Olde Kensington.[79]

MISSION

Throughout the history of Nexus, the main focus to "create an exhibition space for challenging, innovative, and compelling exhibitions" has never wavered. Nexus has hosted a steady stream of exhibitions featuring new artists and unusual mediums. In fact, the gallery prospered early on as the city's premier non-profit venue for progressive work by Philadelphia based artists.[80] Throughout the first twenty-one years, more than one hundred and forty artists have shown at Nexus. "The familiarity of their names is an index of the gallery's importance to Philadelphia art — artists like Janet Biggs, Lynn Denton, Thomas Gartside, Ap. Gorny, Rebecca Johnson, Marilyn Keating, Gabe Martinez, Kate Moran, Stuart Netsky, Judith Schaechter, Carole Sivin, Karen Stone and Michael Willse."[81] An example of this range of exhibitions includes an exhibit *QWIP*, one of the first

[78] Cassway.
[79] Cassway, Nick, E-mail message to author, January 18, 2012.
[80] Suggs, 99.
[81] Rice.

exhibitions to explore the fax machine as an artist's tool.[82] These types of exhibitions became a staple in the gallery and it did, in fact, become the premier place to exhibit alternative mediums in Philadelphia.

While founding the collective, Horvitz, Goldstein, and Lerner anticipated educational programming would become incorporated into Nexus regular schedule but it was quickly abandoned because of the daily demands. From time to time, the group did revisit the concept of adding an education component by hosting various programs for their artists and the community as well. Unfortunately, these attempts never became a regular program for Nexus. For example a program was added for artists with disabilities inspired by a Nexus member who developed Multiple Sclerosis. Interest and participation in the program was, at the time, enthusiastic however it was never repeated. Throughout the years, Nexus tried many different educational programs but was never able to sustain them for long. What hindered Nexus' ability to continue these programmatic endeavors was the lack of capacity mainly due to the limited number of staff and volunteers to manage the programs. After about five to eight years years, Horvitz hired a full-time Gallery Director to assist with the demands of Nexus. "[Hiring the Gallery director] gives us a kind of continuity," said Nexus member James E. Dupree, however it still did not enable them to keep some of the smaller programs permanently.[83] At some point in their efforts to incorporate education into programming, the founders began to understand

[82] Suggs, 99.
[83] Rice.

everything Nexus did was education, “Nexus was educating the public on Contemporary Art and that was our thing” said Horvitz.[84]

Between 1985 and 1990, Nexus revisited their desire to add an educational component to the collective yet again. This time, Nexus began an educational program working with art teachers and children in the Philadelphia Public School System. Member artists would go into the schools to work with the children on projects, host seminars and create artwork with the students that would then be shown in an exhibition at Nexus. The founders felt that this hands-on experience with children in an educational capacity would give artists some teaching experience and provide an opportunity for artists to decide if they wanted to pursue teaching to supplement their artistic career, which many artists considered. This program continued successfully until 2001 when the relationship with the school district was terminated.[85] Although the art in public school program has had some successes, Cassway notes that the program was never fully integrated into the mission and vision of Nexus, functioning more as an appendage.

STAKEHOLDERS

Following the inaugural group of sixteen member artists to join Nexus the admission process to join became peer review. Nexus continued to seek artists creating non-commercial artwork who were a few years out of art school, no

[84] Horvitz.
[85] Cassway.

longer under the influence of their professors.[86] Within the first five years of the founding, the Trustees decided to establish a policy that no artist could be a full Nexus member for more than a certain number of years (approximately five).[87] However, once the member reached their term limits they could remain an alumni member and still participate in the alumni exhibitions, which happened on a less frequent schedule. Horvitz and her co-founders adopted this policy to prevent Nexus from developing a 'Club' feeling. They wanted the artwork to stay fresh and current, so this rule would prevent Nexus from becoming stagnant artistically.[88] When the rule was put into place, current members felt threatened but they eventually accepted the rule for its positive effects. This is demonstrated by the artist reach Nexus has had, exhibiting over one hundred and forty member artists in their first twenty-one years.[89]

When Nexus opened in 1975, the art world was very different than it is today. Now, working in mediums such as sound, light, performance, and video are widely accepted and exhibited all over the world. But when Nexus was founded, there were very few opportunities for artists with experimental work to exhibit. Because the use of alternative mediums was not commonly accepted, "the early groups of artists were more radical, both philosophically and politically. As the years went by, the art world became more accepting of 'alternative' so later members were much more relaxed" describes Horvitz.

---

[86] Rice.
[87] Horvitz.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Rice.

FUTURE

Despite Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art's strong past, the future looks very treacherous for the artist-run gallery. In 2003 member artist Nick Cassway accepted the position as Executive Director. Experiencing some of the changes that occurred when the Gallery transitioned leadership, Cassway launched several projects to better Nexus. In hopes to strengthen the dwindling institutional legacy that occurred following the founder's departure, Cassway was awarded a generous grant from the Samuel S. Fels Fund around 2005 to archive the past thirty-five years of Nexus's history.[90] The archive comprises exhibition announcements and descriptions, press releases, links to artist pages, installation photographs, video interviews, and reviews in the media from Nexus's past.[91] Cassway also led Nexus through its first and, to date, only strategic planning process to align Nexus members, staff, and Board of Directors on their strategic mission, vision, values, and future goals.[92] Following Cassway's departure in 2009 a new director has not been confirmed. Additionally, Nexus has embarked on a nomadic path. In June 2011, Nexus left the Crane Arts building. They have not yet made any formal announcement regarding future plans but since have

[90] Nexus Archives, "Welcome to the Nexus Archives," http://nexusphiladelphia.org/archives/.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Cassway.

hosted exhibitions at the Wallingford Community Art Center, Fleisher Art Memorial, Rotunda, and the Hicks Art Center Gallery.[93]

[93] Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art, "Nexus Member News," http://nexusphiladelphia.org.

# CHAPTER THREE: VOX POPULI

## FORMATION

Unlike today, in the late 1980's there were very few opportunities for early career artists in Philadelphia. Specifically there were only two that history recalls, Nexus Foundation for Today's Art founded in 1975 and Monmenta founded in Philadelphia in 1986 and operating in Brooklyn, New York since 1995.[94] There was still an overwhelming need for access to more artistic opportunities. Responding to Philadelphia's lacking art scene, "Over beers at Dirty Franks, a loose-knit group of Philadelphia artists decided to call a citywide open meeting (publicized through posters, flyers, and word of mouth) to discuss non-existent artistic opportunities and to propose a remedy through self-organization."[95] Founding artists Ann Karlen (the original director from 1997-2000), Mark Forsythe, Jennie Shanker, Julie Marquart, Jennie Desnouee, Michael Frechette, and Beth Rhoades hosted this meeting on the second floor of 622 South 4th Street. In 1988, during this first meeting, Vox Populi was founded and thirty members joined the new collective. Although the founders were responding to the lacking artistic opportunities in Philadelphia at the time, Vox Populi's 21st anniversary publication *Vox Populi: We're working on it* and an interview with former Executive Director and member Amy Adams notes that the founders were most certainly responding to many other influences as well.

---

[94] Suggs, 4.
[95] Vox Populi, "History," http://www.voxpopuligallery.org/index.php?about=on&id=4

Beginning in the late 1960's continuing into the 1970's, New York was experiencing a growing movement to operate outside the traditional art institutions. Author of *Alternative Art, New York, 1965-1985: A Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective (Cultural Politics)*, by Julie Ault discusses this trend:

> Relations between changing conceptions and forms of art practice and kinds of places and spaces art circulated in, as well as the desire to battle constructively the frustration and disillusionment engendered by the establishment system for the distribution of art, led to the creation of the alternative sector in the 1970s. Influenced by concerns of accessibility, portability, and low-cost production, alternative strategies for art making, venues and distribution sites forms of art emerged.[96]

Artist-run groups and collectives formed in response to all the limitations the 'art world' created. And as a legacy of the activism of the 1960's and 70's, artists opposed the *status quo* to address the diversifying political issues and social change that were occurring in the world around them. Amy Adams says, "the institutionalization of art was leaving a lot of people out," so artists came up with their own solution: self-organization. [97]

By the 1980's, alternative spaces were the solution for many artists who wanted change and possibility of self-organization became quite visible, especially to founders Karlen, Forsythe, Shanker, Marquart, Desnouee, Frechette, and Rhodes.

---

[96] Ault.
[97] Amy Adams. "Vox Populi." Interview by author, November 3, 2011. Electronic Recording. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Author's archive.

These founding artists were said to have also been responding to other, more local activity including discreet collaborative projects and groups that had visibility in Philadelphia at the time. Artistic teams like Komar and Melamid, who worked in collaboration for thirty years, and the IRWIN group, the artist collective from Slovenia, were invited to exhibit at Temple Gallery in 1986 and 1990, respectively.[98] Local influences include Philadelphia's "infamous squatter culture and punk and underground music scene, all of which were in full throttle at the time." Amongst the counter-culture scene grew a popular reading amongst young Philadelphia artist "The REISearch Book".[99]

With the inspiration of the emerging alternative art scene and other more local influences, attendees of the first meeting were geared up for action. During Vox Populi's first and highly productive meeting, thirty of the fifty people in attendance joined as members of the collective. By joining, artists had to sign the "Member-Cooperative Agreement" that outlined the responsibilities of membership including: attending monthly meetings, paying membership dues, staffing the gallery, and serving on a committee accountable for various tasks and administrative duties. In return, the collective would serve as a forum for members to show their work and to use the space to host other events and activities, where each could benefit from a collective identity. The group decided on the name Vox Populi, a Latin phrase meaning "voice of the people" and the

[98] Suggs, 4.
[99] Suggs, 5.

founders courageously signed a lease for the second floor of 622 South 4th Street.[100]

Initially, membership to Vox Populi was open to anyone who wanted to join working in any medium. There were no qualifications to joining the group. Upon application, incoming members were asked to list their previous work experience and any skills they had that would be beneficial or useful to the group. Answers generally included things like "'I can use power tools.' 'I love to light shit,' 'Free Xeroxing, access to printers,' or 'I have a computer'" which were valid and valuable skills to the group at that point.[101] This method of application was continued for some time in the beginning and served the group's non-hierarchical and non-judgmental values.

TRANSITION

Early on, the inner workings of Vox Populi were quite simple "fast and loose, but with bylaws".[102] The activity and inter-workings of the group were structured by their bylaws alone. Expansion, transition, and deviation from this method were slow, if they happened at all. Occasionally the gallery would host special exhibitions or performances, but most of their time and energy was spent keeping the collective space going by hosting member shows, improving the space, and paying rent.

---

[100] Suggs, 5.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Suggs, 6.

However, around 1990 at one of the collectives monthly meetings, peer review and selection was suggested as a requirement to join Vox Populi and members were divided. The division existed between those members who wanted the collective to remain a truly open community and members who wanted to create a venue to host exhibitions of edgy, interesting, and alternative art. This decision was critical for the youthful group and when the collective voted to ratify the member admission process, many members left in protest.[103] Adding peer selection to the process of joining Vox Populi also "added continuity to the group" says former Director Amy Adams " because current members selecting whom they want to work as future members establishes a sort of thread that goes throughout the history of the organization." Member artists began choosing all incoming artists through this system, which also allowed the group to develop level of aesthetic quality amongst their member's artwork. As seen in this case of changing the collective's membership process, every decision was made by consensus among members. The collective functioned democratically and without a Director until 1997 when they created the part-time position.

Throughout the 1990's Vox Populi hosted many special exhibitions, performances, member exhibitions, and fundraisers for various charities and causes to sustain themselves as a collective. They sustained themselves financially by membership dues and accepting many generous in-kind donations.

---

[103] Suggs, 5.

Amidst the gentrification of South Street, Vox Populi moved to 17-19 North 2nd Street in Old City.[104] Here they shared a building with an experimental music cooperative Alliance Music Workshop and began to interact with peer organizations on a small scale. Through the peer connection Vox Populi made with Alliance Music Workshop, the gallery also began to host bands to play in the gallery frequently. Enjoying the connection made in this location, the gallery strived to continue working with peers whenever possible. Later, Vox Populi moved to 141 North 2nd Street, becoming neighbors with the Clay Studio and Nexus in 1996.[105] Over the first ten years and throughout these moves to and within Old City, the collective struggled financially. Struggling to pay its rent each month affected their ability to expand their vision of more ambitious programming.

In a decision made through countless debates among members Vox Populi decided to become a nonprofit to "ease persistent insolvency and finance more ambitious programming.[106] Among the debate, some opposing members did not want to be accountable to a board or a foundation because it was another sort of institutional trapping.[107] Others felt that opening the organization to governmental and foundation funding "would sully [its] spotless indie creed." However, in 1997 the collective began operating as a non-profit and in 1999 they received their 501

[104] Suggs, 6.
[105] Suggs, 7.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Adams.

( c ) (3) status.[108] Ultimately, the decision to become a non-profit organization proved to be the right decision for the collective at that time. From an outsider's perspective, positive change that can be seen in the collective's expanded programming and physical space.

MISSION

Since its founding, Vox Populi's intention and purpose has always been to create opportunities for young and under-represented artists to exhibit their work in Philadelphia. Since their first meeting, the collective has continued to carry their mission forward. As they exist today, their mission remains unchanged: "Vox Populi is an artist collective that works to support the challenging and experimental work of under-represented artists with monthly exhibitions, gallery talks, performances, lectures, and related programming."[109] While they have remained committed to their mission, the collective has matured by expanding the group's vision through diverse and expanded programming and artistic opportunities.

Change is experienced constantly in an organization like Vox Populi. The organization was designed to accommodate change by keeping the collective structure and mission constant so that everything else can remain in flux. "The structure or framework of the organization is passed down, the content and

---

[108] Suggs, 7.
[109] Vox Populi, "About," http://www.voxpopuligallery.org/index.php?about=on&id=1.

activity (ex: programming, benefits, fundraisers) change constantly over time," describes Adams. Because decisions are made collectively by an ever-evolving cast of artists who bring different perspectives and ideas change is constant. With each new member come new ideas and perspectives about society, culture, and politics, which allow the organization to remain relevant in a changing world.

This change to remain relevant can be seen throughout the history of Vox Populi. In the collective's life span, they have always been aligned with progressive causes and community activism. This was part of their original vision for the group. Engagement in current political and social issues was a value that many in this artist group shared. For example, in the very early years when they were still raising money for the building of proper walls in the gallery space, member Dave Grill organized a benefit in which the proceeds would be donated to an organization that supports the homeless.[110] During the early years these types of benefits were often realized in more quirky and unusual forms like cabbage bowls and cakewalks.[111] Today, while artists still share the activist nature, how they react to politics, social and economic inequity and the shape of the final artistic outcome has changed.

Aside from being involved in social and political activism in Philadelphia, part of the collective's vision has also been to participate in the exchanging of work and guest curated shows with other collectives and artist-run endeavors nationally.

---

[110] Suggs, 5.
[111] Suggs, 7.

Vox Populi began participating in exchanges with other collectives almost immediately. Founder Michael Frechette organized the first annual *May Day Show*, including both local artists and artists from the Willis Gallery, Detroit's first alternative art space. [112]

As part of their core mission, member exhibitions and special exhibitions were consistent for the collective from Vox's the first decade through the present with the occasional benefit, performance, exchange or guest curated show. They consistently offer exhibitions and performances of contemporary art of the time. Over time and through their alternative offerings, Vox became known as "critical to the art scene" in Philadelphia because of their encouragement of artistic risk-taking by artists.[113]

Following the studios move to 141 North 2nd Street in 1996 the collective decided to try some new programming. While occupying the Second Street Art Building with The Clay Studio and Nexus, Vox Populi took on their first and only resident artists to date: Sandy Camomile and Tim Kaulen. During the same year, 1999, the members instituted a policy of hosting monthly gallery talks with exhibiting artists to their permanent calendar.[114]

---

[112] Suggs, 5.
[113] Suggs, 7.
[114] Ibid.

After almost a decade spent in old city and a brief period of homelessness, Vox Populi found a new home in 2001 at 1315 Cherry Street in the Gilbert building. Here they became neighbors to the Fabric Workshop and Museum, White Box Gallery (since moved to New York), and the Asian Arts Initiative. That move ushered in a period of dramatic programmatic expansion. New program initiatives included annual guest-curated exhibitions; partnerships with other local non-profit organizations; a Video Lounge that screened time-based, new media work; a gallery dedicated to visiting artists; and a host of exchange shows with peer organizations across the country. Within a few years of being in the Gilbert Building, rumors of the building's demise to make way for the expansion of the Pennsylvania Convention Center were circulating. As rumors were confirmed, the collective had no choice but begin the search for yet another home.[115] Hoping to remain connected with peer collectives in Philadelphia, Vox Populi befriended an artists-run gallery called Black Floor Gallery in a dilapidated building at 319 North 11th Street in Trestletown, also considered part of Chinatown North.[116] With the help of members of Black Floor Gallery, Vox Populi was able to secure a warehouse space within the same building and became neighbors.

Following their most recent move into Trestletown in 2008, Vox Populi embarked on a major expansion, 4,000 additional square feet of physical space and new programming initiatives. Since being in their new home, Vox has initiated a dedicated project space within their main gallery called "Fourth Wall" which

[115] Suggs, 8.
[116] Ibid.

began in November 2010. "Fourth Wall is a series of new works chosen by a group of professionals from various locations and backgrounds. Each month, one of these curators will present the work of an experimental artist working in video, film, animation, or new media in the Vox Populi Project Space."[117] During this same time, Vox Populi was invited to participate in the 2010 X-Initiative's *No Soul For Sale*, a festival comprised of seventy of the worlds most exciting not-for-profit centers, alternative institutions, artists' collectives and independent enterprises who get free, undivided space to devise an installation of their choosing.[118] [119] This invitation solidified their reputation as a space for creative experimentation on an international level.

Vox Populi expansion plan also includes AUX, "a new live arts venue located adjacent to Vox Populi Gallery at 319 North 11th Street in Philadelphia. A collaborative and open territory, AUX is a reserve of physical space for artists to extend their practices with experimental activities and peripheral action". AUX opened July 29, 2011.[120] New spaces include programming participation by other collectives and curators including those from Little Berlin and the Institute of Contemporary Art. Being such a new addition to Vox Populi and the Philadelphia arts community, it will be interesting to see the outcome in the future.

---

[117] Fourth Wall, "Fourth Wall," http://www.fourthwallatvox.blogspot.com/.
[118] No Soul For Sale, "2010 at Tate Modern," http://www.nosoulforsale.com/2010.
[119] Alex Gartenfeld, "Art: No Soul For Sale," Interview Magazine, http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/no-soul-for-sale/#_.
[120] AUX, "AUXBlog," http://www.auxperformancespace.blogspot.com/.

STAKEHOLDERS

At Vox Populi, member artists have continuously played a major role in the collective's history. Upon founding, there was no selection process necessary. Potential members simply had to fill out an application listing any humble skills they had and Vox Populi welcomed them. As peer review was instituted some members objected because they sought a fully open collective. However, both methods of selection brought young artists of diverse mediums to the collective. Participating artists were very dedicated and hands on to the gallery, mainly due to necessity. Since Vox Populi had no formal positions until 1997, everything, from exhibition installation to announcement design and printing, was a shared responsibility of the members.[121]

Although member artists have become much more developed in their career prior to joining, members are still highly involved in the collective.[122] In fact, all of the Executive Directors had been practicing artists. In addition, many of the people that serve on the Board of Directors and Associate Board of Directors have been members of Vox Populi in the past. While not an official standard, each Board currently consists of approximately twenty-five percent current or past member artists. Also, there are many other artists on the Boards from outside Vox Populi's

[121] Suggs, 5.
[122] Adams.

membership.[123] The involvement of past members in the Executive Director role and as Members of the Board of Director's plays particular importance at Vox Populi by continuing the institutional legacy and ensuring artistic quality in every decision made.

FUTURE

Moving forward, Vox Populi is beginning an audacious chapter of its life. Since opening in their new home in April 2008 at 319 North 11th Street, the collective has announced two new endeavors, Fourth Wall and AUX.[124] While it is too soon to make any assumptions on the future, Vox's past decisions made collectively will certainly be tested. The decision to become a nonprofit corporation to resolve financial insolvencies will be tested by the increased financial responsibility of a second location and a recently hired Programs Coordinator, their second full-time staff member and first non-member artist in a leadership position. Although they have broadened their available resources, including charitable gifts and grants, it is unclear if it will be enough to resolve their incessant financial woes without a strategic plan in place. Additionally, the choice to remain under a collective leadership model will be observed as they being a new phase as a collective. Lastly, their decision to move to the outskirts of center city will be tested with the substantial increase in programming. When choosing their current location in the move from the Gilbert Building, the

[123] Vox Populi. "Staff and Board of Directors." http://www.voxpopuligallery.org/index.php?about=on&id=3
[124] Suggs, 8.

collective wanted to remain on the city fringes, which also complemented their budget. However, "it may not be the best choice since the organization has grown so much" says Amy Adams, former Executive Director at Vox Populi.

Since the new home for Vox Populi remains on the outskirts of the Center City district of Philadelphia where the cost of rent is among the more reasonable, many other younger collectives have joined them in the 319 North 11th Street building. Like the Second Street Art Building, the availability of affordable space is essential to collectives. Currently, Vox Populi shares the building with art venues including Marginal Utility, Grizzly Grizzly, Napoleon, and Tiger Strikes Asteroid.[125] Additionally, since moving to the building, previous tenants Copy Gallery, Progressive Sharing, and Khmer Art Gallery have departed.[126] While the newer art venues create competition, they also create a hub of artistic activity, similar the Second Street Art Building, which positively affects the community and ultimately bring a larger audience to the building collectively.

With the increased popularity of the Trestletown/ China Town North community, concerns over site control should be considered. Since Vox Populi has moved to the neighborhood and continued to lay roots, many more collectives have decided to join them. Grizzly Grizzly and Tiger Strikes Asteroid have made 319 North 11th Street and they intend on remaining there. Amongst the popularity of the 11th

[125] Tiger Strikes Asteroid, "About," http://www.tigerstrikesasteroid.com/about.
[126] Kelani Nichole, "First Friday at 319 N. 11th St.," The Art Blog, http://www.theartblog.org/2009/05/first-friday-at-319-n-11th-st/.

Street building, it is important to note that the collectives and galleries rent the space without any long-term security. Also, Trestletown and the 319 North 11th Street building are adjacent to the Reading Viaduct. If the Reading Viaduct is developed, as it most certainly will be in the future, the Viaduct will be an engine of change in that community. Until then, it will be a source of community tension and real estate speculation. The combination of affordability and availability have been critical, but without real estate ownership by the collectives, the lack of site control could arise later as a major issue as the community becomes more developed, like the Clay Studio is experiencing now.

# CHAPTER FOUR: SUMMARY OF COMPARISONS, TRENDS AND CRITICAL ISSUES:

Although this investigation into the histories of the Clay Studio, Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art, and Vox Populi has illuminated very distinct differences, it is important to highlight interesting trends among these artist-run groups and examine their importance. Artists as stakeholders, artist's involvement in governance, physical space and community have continually surfaced as critical issues over time, affecting the success and direction of an artist collective. With better understanding of these critical issues, artist collectives and groups in the future could utilize this knowledge as an evaluative tool.

## ARTISTS AS STAKEHOLDERS

As we have seen in the Clay Studio, Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art, and Vox Populi, artists as stakeholders define artist collectives as a group. Artists play many essential roles including leaders, governors, and administrators, while simultaneously practicing as artists. Throughout an artist collective's growth, artists' involvement and participation in the organization's mission, vision, and value will define the organization's future.

In the artist-run groups examined, a direct correlation can be seen between artists' continued participation in the organization's governance and successfully

maintaining artistic and programmatic quality while building organizational capacity. This is most visible in Vox Populi, where as professional staff and Board expands, artists are still included and share in management conversations and decisions. As the organization realized the need for an Executive Director in 1997, they chose founding member Ann Karlen and since all Executive Directors had been Members Artists.[127] While not an official requirement, their Board of Directors and Associate Board of Directors have always included member artists. Each currently consists of approximately twenty-five percent current or past member artists. In addition, there are many other artists on the Boards from outside Vox Populi's membership.[128] [129] Collectives (and collectives turned non-profit organizations) woven with artists' stakeholders in governance helps maintain artistic and programmatic quality and contributes to overall success.

Similarly to the success observed when artists are stakeholders in the leadership capacity, artists involved in selection of incoming members also demonstrate benefits for the collective's success. Common among artist-run groups, peer selection for incoming members has proven to be important to the collective structure and overall ability of the collective remaining together. The continuity of peer selection creates a through line from the past, to the present and future membership of artists. Artists choose people that they can work with and tend to stay the most dedicated to content and quality of the artistic product. When an

[127] http://www.voxpopuligallery.org/index.php?about=on&id=4
[128] http://www.voxpopuligallery.org/index.php?about=on&id=3
[129] Suggs, 9.

Artistic/Executive Director or Board get involved in the selection process the member artists lose the ability to continue the 'thread'. However, generally, this change allows for more diverse, wider reach of artists selected.

Different examples of peer selection can be seen in Nexus, Vox Populi, and the Clay Studio. Since early in Nexus and Vox Populi's histories, they have used the peer selection method, creating a 'thread' in their membership, which continues today. Contrarily, the Clay Studio's selection process has changed considerably to a combined selection method, voted on by the peer member artists, Artistic Director, and a guest juror. Additionally, in their Associates program, the members have no control over who joins the program. This feature has expanded the diversity of member artists and created international reach among member artists, which might not have happened if the Clay Studio had not changed the policy.

As these examples demonstrate, the more the artists are involved in the governance of an artist-run collective through management conversations and decisions, the more successful the group becomes in maintaining artistic and programmatic quality. When the artists lose the direct ability to influence artistic mission, vision, and values directly, the artist collective will likely evolve into non-profit. The Clay Studio is experiencing this as they focus on their organizational brand.

GOVERNANCE

Artist-Collectives are generally the product of many artists who share a similar vision. They frequently are governed by consensus decision-making by the members of the collective or by their founders. When new leadership comes, it brings in a new perspective or vision, possibly fracturing the collective's original vision even if only in a small way. Over time and as artists lose decision-making capabilities, an artist collective move towards becoming an organization where the mission, vision, and values are all broadened. Therefore, artist participation in the governance of a collective is important to retain collective vision.

Organizations like Vox Populi have had member artists evolve into directorship while the Clay Studio opted to hire external leadership in their adolescent stage. As their need for additional professional staff grows, the trend has continued. In January 2003, the Clay Studio hired Jeff Guido as Artistic Director.[130] Since joining the studio, Guido has made some fundamental changes to the processes in hopes to encourage more professional development for the Clay Studio and the artists, as well as creating an overarching brand for the organization. He has a vision for the studio, but it is not intrinsically connected to the Studio's collective roots.

However in other collectives, the lack of artist participation in governance and leadership capacities can be detrimental the collectives overall success. The

[130] National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, "Jeff Guido." http://nceca.net/static/about_board_guido.php

founders of Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art held control of leadership for more than two decades. While the founders continued the collective momentum over that period of time, when they left there was a leadership crisis because they had not allowed their artists to become involved in the governance of the collective. When they departed, the lack of leadership developed from within the Artist Members caused a crisis for the organization because there was no one to carry on the institutional legacy and overall vision. Nexus had not integrated their member artists into board members, like Vox Populi and The Clay Studio had done, and had not developed a succession plan to prevent this type of crisis from occurring.

SPACE

Space has been a reoccurring critical issue for all three collectives under consideration here. Each collective has individually demonstrated that a place-based organization needs to become locationally stabilized after the initial start up. Having an affordable and stable space, in the right location, allows the collective room to mature in its later years.

The Clay Studio found stability in its current home located at 139 North 2nd Street. The security of a long-term lease enabled them to expand both their facility and programming. They were able to plan and execute large exhibitions and borrow space back from their building co-tenants and while building relationships with peer organizations like Nexus, Zone one and Vox Populi. For the community, the large secure facility created a space where audiences could

participate in programming from various art venues with one stop. The Clay Studio has become an anchor to the arts in Old City.

Nexus, unlike the Clay Studio, began with a sound location early on, right off Rittenhouse Square at 2017 Chancellor Street. After fifteen years, Nexus moved into the Second Street Art Building with the Clay Studio where the remained until 2007 when the lost their space. The loss of affordable secure space caused the organization to quickly become unraveled. Landing in the Crane Arts Building for just a short time, in 2011 they announced Nexus's departure from Crane without a future destination. Without site control over their exhibition space, the group is unable to continue routine programming their audience is accustomed to. Exhibitions hosted by Nexus have become sporadic and irregular, their last exhibit closing October 15, 2011 and no updates given since. Changing locations along with their ongoing leadership crisis and lack of strategic planning in their maturity seems to be detrimental to their future success.

Vox Populi has had many homes over the years; its first home being on South Street, two in Old City followed by the Gilbert Bldg, and now 319 North 11th Street. They have always enjoyed locations with peer collectives as neighbors. With their most recent move to 11$^{th}$ Street, it appears they are growing more permanent roots with major expansions to programming and facilities in past years. They have also become an anchor in their current building, attracting new artistic groups to the building since 2008. However, their future stability (and

possible success) will have much to do with their ability to control their current site while the surrounding community becomes improved. Currently, they do not have long-term site control, which will have to be addressed in the near future.

In addition to an artist-collectives need for stability, this examination has shown that collectives benefit from having their homes in proximity to peer arts groups. Buildings like the Second Street Arts Building, Gilbert Building, Crane, or the unnamed building Vox Populi occupies now with other artist-collectives, provide an opportunity for building an arts community, opportunities, and audiences. Artist collective success could possibly be linked to their participation with their peers through shared audiences and shared site, ideally controlled by a peer group. Smaller collectives benefit by associating themselves artistically with larger and more established and respected arts groups. Also, both collectives benefit by drawing a larger audience, sharing resources, and, more importantly, together they foster a place for contemporary artistic dialog. This is seen extensively in all three collectives examined. Additionally buildings like the Second Street Arts Building, controlled by a peer collective or organization, could build stability among all the collectives involved by securing long-term affordable space.

Moving forward, both the Clay Studio and Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art are anticipating major changes in their locations, causing them to re-evaluate their futures. Similarly, both groups must recognize the impact of a lack of space. The Clay Studio, with less than years remaining on its thirty-year lease, must develop

new options for a permanent location. Impact on the organization could be enormous; not limited to re-locating elements of the Studio into several smaller operations in different neighborhoods in the city. Since there is no possibility for the ownership of their current building, this issue will have to be resolved. Nexus is also encountering permanent space issues as they are no longer located in the Crane Arts building. Although this appears to be internal issues for Nexus, including a leadership crisis and the loss of institutional legacy, the uncertainty must be resolved in order to continue fulfilling their mission. Ultimately, collectives have grown up and out of spaces and with moves, come expansions and new ideas, as well as challenges, especially in programming.

# CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this examination and documentation of the histories of the Clay Studio, Nexus/Foundation for Today's Art, and Vox Populi has assisted in better understanding the Artist Cooperative movement as a visual arts organizational model and helped unveil the key aspects and components that allow the artist cooperative to grow and transform successfully throughout its life cycle. In the case of all three groups, individual artists have emerged as organizational leaders who have learned through experience what it takes to identify the right facilities, fund their fit out and operations, and maintain critical relationships with funders in order to fulfill their central mission as 501( c )(3)'s. Artist collectives, defined by their joint ownership and democratic control by its artists, face three main critical issues over time, affecting the success an artist collective: retaining artists as stakeholders, artist's involvement in governance, and secured affordable physical space have continually surfaced as critical issues over time, defining the artist-collectives ability for success.

# WORK CITED


Adams, Amy. “Vox Populi.” Interview by author, November 3, 2011. Electronic Recording. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Author’s archive.

Ault, Julie. ed., *Alternative Art, New York, 1965-1985: A Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective (Cultural Politics)*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) Google Books edition. http://books.google.com/books?id=2ZzxqQqQk94C&pg=PA179&lpg=PA179&dq=Alternative+Spaces+in+Philadelphia&source=bl&ots=CSL7eZLr-b&sig=6OmLZQufn0euB4H9E_5ZwUIyt_k&hl=en&ei=LdD3TJIhgbSVB4Ga_KAC&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=7&ved=0CEEQ6AEwBg#v=onepage&q=Alternative%20Spaces%20in%20Philadelphia&f=false (accessed November 30, 2010).

AUX. “AUXBlog.” http://www.auxperformancespace.blogspot.com/ (accessed February 15, 2012).

Cassway, Nick. E-mail message to author, January 18, 2012.

Cassway, Nick. “Nexus/Foundation for Today’s Art.” Interview by author, January 12, 2012. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Author’s archive.

Clark, Jimmy. ed. *Contemporary East European Ceramics.* Philadelphia: Published by The Clay Studio and The Philadelphia Ceramic Consortium, 1991.

Clark, Jimmy. “The Clay Studio” Interview by author, October 29, 2011. Electronic recording. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Author’s archive.

Fenix Gallery. “About the Artist.” http://fenixgallery.com/artist_bio.php?ID=30 (accessed January 6, 2012).

Fourth Wall. “Fourth Wall.” http://www.fourthwallatvox.blogspot.com/ (accessed February 15, 2012).

Gartenfeld, Alex. “Art: No Soul For Sale.” Interview Magazine. http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/no-soul-for-sale/#_ (accessed February 15, 2012).

Georgia Council for the Arts. “GCA White Paper: Artist Cooperatives,” http://gca.georgia.gov/00/article/0,2086,148472487_148551957_156928074,00.html (accessed November 27, 2010).

Gunn, Dan. "Artist-Run Spaces: A Brief History Since 1984," Proximity Magazine. http://proximitymagazine.com/2009/07/artist-run-spaces-a-brief-history-since-1984/ (accessed November 27, 2010).

Horvitz, Suzanne. “Nexus/Foundation for Today’s Art.” Interview by author, November 12, 2011. Electronic recording. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Author’s archive.

Nagle, Ron. “Ron Nagle” Rena Bransten Gallery. http://www.renabranstengallery.com/Bio_Nagle.html (accessed January 26, 2012).

Narrow, Kathryn. E-mail message to author, February 7, 2012.

National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, “Jeff Guido.” http://nceca.net/static/about_board_guido.php (accessed January 26, 2012).

National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts. “Past Conferences.” http://nceca.net/static/conference_pastconferences.php (accessed January 26, 2012).

National Endowment for the Arts, Research Division. "About Us." http://www.nea.gov/about/AtAGlance.html (accessed December 1, 2010).

National Endowment for the Arts, Research Division. "Artists Increase 81% in the 1970s." http://www.nea.gov/research/Notes/3.pdf (accessed November 30, 2010).

Nexus Archives. “1976.” http://nexusphiladelphia.org/archives/?cat=7 (accessed January 6, 2012).

Nexus Archives. “June 16, 1976.” http://nexusphiladelphia.org/archives/?p=773#more-773 (accessed January 6, 2012).

Nexus Archives. “Welcome to the Nexus Archives.” http://nexusphiladelphia.org/archives/ (accessed January 6, 2012).

Nexus/Foundation for Today’s Art. “About Nexus.” http://nexusphiladelphia.org/about.html (accessed September 17, 2011).

Nexus/Foundation for Today’s Art. “Nexus Member News.” http://nexusphiladelphia.org (accessed January 6, 2012).

Nichole, Kelani. “First Friday at 319 N. 11th St.” The Art Blog http://www.theartblog.org/2009/05/first-friday-at-319-n-11th-st/ (accessed February 15, 2012).

No Soul For Sale. “2010 at Tate Modern.” http://www.nosoulforsale.com/2010 (accessed February 15, 2012).

Rice, Robin. “The Success of Nexus.” CityPaper.net, June 5–12, 1997. http://archives.citypaper.net/articles/060597/article070.shtml.

Skinner, Damian. “Ornament as Art: Avant-Grade Jewelry from the Helen Williams Drutt Collection.” The Journal of Modern Craft, v.3, n.2 (July 2010): 269-272. http://www.artjewelryforum.org/book-reviews/ornament-art-avant-garde-jewelry-helen-williams-drutt-collection.

Suggs, Andrew. ed. *Vox Populi: We’re working on it*. Philadelphia: Published by Vox Populi, 2010.

The Clay Studio. “A Comprehensive Four-Year Plan to Guide the Clay Studio’s Continued Success and Relevance: June 2009-June 2013,” Internal document emailed to author, April 27, 2010.

The Clay Studio. "Artists." http://www.theclaystudio.org/artist/ (accessed September 17, 2011).

The Clay Studio. "Associates Program." http://www.theclaystudio.org/artist/associate.php. (accessed September 17, 2011).

The Clay Studio. "Education," http://www.theclaystudio.org/education/mission.php. (accessed September 17, 2011).

The Clay Studio. "History," http://www.theclaystudio.org/about/history.php (accessed September 17, 2011).

The Clay Studio, “History of the Clay Studio,” Internal document emailed to author, April 27, 2010.

Tiger Strikes Asteroid. “About.” http://www.tigerstrikesasteroid.com/about (accessed February 15, 2012).

Vox Populi. “About.” http://www.voxpopuligallery.org/index.php?about=on&id=1 (accessed September 17, 2011).

Vox Populi. “History.” http://www.voxpopuligallery.org/index.php?about=on&id=4 (accessed January 6, 2012).

Vox Populi. “Staff and Board of Directors.” http://www.voxpopuligallery.org/index.php?about=on&id=3 (accessed January 6, 2012).

Wallis, Brian. “Public Funding and Alternative Spaces.” In *Alternative Art, 1965-1985: A Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective (Cultural Politics),* ed. Julie Ault, 162-182, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002. Google Books edition. http://books.google.com/books?id=2ZzxqQqQk94C&pg=PA179&lpg=PA179&dq=Alternative+Spaces+in+Philadelphia&source=bl&ots=CSL7eZLr-b&sig=6OmLZQufn0euB4H9E_5ZwUIyt_k&hl=en&ei=LdD3TJIhgbSVB4Ga_KAC&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=7&ved=0CEEQ6AEwBg#v=onepage&q=Alternative%20Spaces%20in%20Philadelphia&f=false (accessed November 30, 2010).

Warren, Lynne. "Art Centers, Alternative," Encyclopedia of the History of Chicago. http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/74.html (accessed November 27, 2010).

Williams, Amy Sarner. E-mail message to author, February 13, 2012.

Williams, Amy Sarner. “The Clay Studio.” Interview by author, November 16, 2011. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Author’s archive.